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ABSTRACT

Focusing on a serious social problem that links mass communication and society, this paper uses the techniques of irony and meta-research to examine the paradoxial discrepancies between the intent of acts and the outcomes of actions in social and media policy in the culture of alcohol. It examines the history and folklore of alcohol and community; the role of alcohol in journalism, humor, language, music, films and television, politics, and advertising; and the relationship of sports, media, and alcohol. In addition, the paper discusses alcohol and the newer minority cultures (the aged, women, gays, the handicapped), as well as those cultures of race and ethnicity. It directs attention toward the "alcohol minority" community and to the media coverage of the problems of alcohol. In conclusion, the paper suggests a more appropriate agenda for social action and research and notes how drinking is interwoven with the nature of urban culture. (Author/FL)

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CONTRADICTIONS AND CROSS PURPOSES IN ALCOHOL USAGE IN MEDIA AND SOCIETY: AN IRONIC FOCUS

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Abstract

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This paper on a serious social problem linking mass communication and society uses the technique of irony and meta research to examine the paradoxical discrepancies between the intent of acts and the outcome of actions in social and media policy in the culture of alcohol.

It examines the history and folklore of alcohol and community; the role of alcohol in journalism, in humor, in language, in music, in film and television, in politics, in advertising, and in the trio of sports, media and alcohol.

It also discusses alcohol and the newer minority cultures (the aged, gays, women, handicapped) as well as those of race and ethnicity. Attention is also directed at the "alcohol minority" community, as well as media coverage of the problems of alcohol.

The paper suggests a more appropriate agenda for social action and research, and notes how drinking is interwoven with the nature of urban culture.

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CONTRADICTIONS AND CROSS PURPOSES IN ALCOHOL USAGE IN MEDIA AND SOCIETY: AN IRONIC FOCUS

A portion of the social crisis associated with the use of alcohol appears to be related to the communications media, which may function in a contradictory manner to encourage alcoholism while prescribing its cures. Such a promotion of problems, while peddling solutions for symptoms, reflects the cultural cross purposes of the media, which may retard the development of social behavior and an appropriate public agenda conducive to public understanding of alcohol and intelligent preventive action on issues and needed new directions in theory and research.

The chemicals in ink and film, gas and alcohol, all seem to blend in a mediated and inebriated society which uses social anesthetics to change subjective perceptions rather than objective conditions. The brain and body of both self and community are inseparable, from the cheap gin used to forget the bad life in the Bowery, barrio and ghetto, to the costly cocaine used to preserve the good life in the suburbs, Sun Belt and Silicon Valley. The use of drunks and drugs for mental "trips" on the way to methadone and alcohol "communities" fuels social traffic so full

of contradictions and cross-purposes that both media and society become synonymous addictions and similar anesthesia.

Alcohol has been almost inseparable from communications and the notion of community. The folklore of whiskey in American history has been traced from the distilleries of the Pilgrims and the Whiskey Rebellion of 1794 to the pictorial Prohibition Days and the present.[1] The liquor preferences and portions of politicians and U.S. Presidents have been celebrated in fables from Andrew Johnson, Jackson and Grant to Eugene Debs, Joseph McCarthy and Billy Carter.[2]

The settlement of the American frontier was soaked with alcohol and the romance of the Western saloon, while American males found their masculinity mixed with patriotism and alcoholism in the military until recent times.[3] In journalism, "though no one ever talks about it very much, booze has played as big a role in the lives of modern American writers as talent, money, women, and the longing to be top dog."[4] "The list of American literary drunks is very long", with all of the six American Nobel Prize winners being alcoholics, hard drinkers or wine lovers. Part of their drinking was due to "the burden put upon the creative self by so many contradictory pressures" in society.[5]

In day-to-day news-gathering and the stress of deadlines, alcohol has been part of the training for journalists. From the days of The Front Page to Watergate reporting, the drunk city editor and drinking at "the press club" have been romantic legends tied to success. Carl Bernstein of the Woodward & Bernstein duo, told how "I really grew up in that newsroom. Two martinis were standard at lunch" and each day after work, he'd sip for another four to five hours as he "learned from the old timers" . . . how to drink and chase women."[6]

While recent studies indicate that "it is doubtful that causality can ever be established"[7] between alcoholism and newspaper work, relations between the two suggest contradictory elements in the media as a solution to alcohol problems. In a somewhat similar way, the alcohol culture has created its own "language of drunks" which has become part of society's communication style and content.[8] The web of irony continues.

The communal medium of humor, which may short-circuit controversy and debate, is inter-woven with alcohol, which is the subject of many jokes, just under that for sex and ethnicity.[9] Comedy routines by or about the drunk saturate entertainment media from the socially-excused singers Phil Harris and Dean Martin to the mimicry of Foster Brooks and the caricature of Ed McMahon. Even the television commercials advertising treatment for alcoholics have been objects of comedy.[10] The WCTU and Prohibition have until recently been automatic symbols of humor in the culture of alcohol,while humorous liquor ads attract attention of drinkers.[11]

The mixture of the cultural medium of music with alcohol is still another example, as romance, love and sex blend with the language of alcohol from jazz to soft pop and hard rock, with open drinking on stage by performers sponsored by liquor and beer industries. In country and western music, this combination is common. Singer Kris Kristofferson once called himself "God's own drunk",[12] and Willie Nelson's "Whiskey River" is both legend and reality,[13] like that of Janis Joplin and George Jones. Merle Haggard's songs often deal with drinking and he once spent $12,737 all for drinks for 5,095 customers in a Fort Worth tavern to celebrate his successful song "C.C. Waterback"--named for Canadian Club whiskey which he bought for them.[14]

Such popular figures who fuse alcohol with the symbolic content of

their medium have been popular with recent U.S. Presidents, who have honored them with national stature and attention. When Nelson and Haggard were given a reception at the White House for the 25th anniversary of the Country Music Association, President Reagan told Americans the singers "understand our love of country and God."[15] Drinks not included ?

While the relationship between drinking and country and western music seems evident, studies are not conclusive. One analysis of such lyrics found that the songs promote drinking as a means to solve problems, but reflect an ambivalence toward its use.[16] Another found that such songs cause bar patrons to drink more, especially if there are dim lights, restricted space, and macho dress and decorations.[17] Still another found that such music and drinks can affect perceptions of the opposite sex.[18]

Drinking on film reflects a coalescence of the world of those who produce them and the larger society which consumes them. The medium and accepted social behavior are merged with alcohol from the mature and sophisticated John Barrymore and Humphrey Bogart winning women, to the drunken sailors and sergeants winning wars, and the guzzing gun-fighters winning the West. In between, there range the humorous attempts of W. C. Fields to battle the hangover and the moralistic message movies on actors and actresses battling the bottle.

Television drinking has been criticized by groups like the WCTU,[19] and the Christian Science Monitor for its positive presentation and "the deplorable example of liquor as an integral and necessary part of 'average' family life."[20] The more recent research has found that "the world of prime time network programming is a world saturated with alcohol" with more than three drinking incidents an hour, mostly hard liquor.[21] Although linkage of content to effect(as with songs and drinking) is difficult, or unstudied,

another research investigator suggests "That much alcohol presentation should tempt the non-drinker and lead a child viewer to wonder what he or she is missing."[22] Much preliminary research in this area is devoted to measuring the frequency of alcohol-related events in TV shows and in commercials,[23] but one study moved closer to linking the medium to society as it found that in prime-time TV, those who drink are usually presented as "good" characters, but do not suffer and are not censured, and "the lack of consequences of drinking as portrayed on television does not reflect the seriousness of the consequences in real life."[24]

The tendency of alcohol to permeate media and to merge advertising with editorial content is an area of difficult research. The links between alcohol ads and alcohol abuse have been studied,[25] along with the effects of advertising on alcohol preferences.[26] The use of sex without obligation to sell alcohol in TV commercials,[27] and the glamourization of alcohol,[28] have been areas of concern. Newspapers openly seek and boast of their stake in the liquor market,[29] and for magazines, liquor ads are a bonanza,[30] as few reject such ads. When the conservative Reader's Digest in 1978 accepted its first wine and beer ads since it began publishing in 1922, it admitted the societal alloy in the alcohol culture saying such drinks "are part of American life and culture".[31] The media and society blend continued a year later when it accepted liquor ads, saying "alcoholic beverages used in moderation are part of American life."[32]

Although more research is needed"before it can be concluded that increases in advertising for alcoholic beverages definitely cause a more favorable editorial policy toward the use of alcohol"[33] by magazines, it might be useful to look at areas where ads seem to merge with content of both media and society. One is in the area of sports and drinking beer.

Alcoholic beverages are frequently mixed by media and society. Liquor ads blend with sports pages. Beer is sold at games and promoted by players in commercials. Beer companies own and sponsor sports teams in and with their names. And winning teams douse themselves with champagne. Selling liquor means the marketing business.[34] That key to success is sought by the two giant companies, Anheuser-Busch of St. Louis and Miller Brewing Co. of Milwaukee and as one analysis states it:[35]

> For nearly every brewer, the best way to reach these customers is through sporting events. In that contest, Anheuser-Busch appears to be the biggest spender. On radio, the company sponsors 20 of the 26 major league baseball teams, 14 of the 28 pro-football teams, 18 of the 23 basketball teams and 12 of 21 hockey teams. After all those outlays, there is still money for promoting racquetball, running, touch football, fishing, grad racing, softball, horse racing, soccer, rodeos and bowling. Busch also spends millions on the teams themselves. It owns the St. Louis Cardinals baseball team, paid $10 million to become the official beer of the 1984 Olympics and supports the U.S. Davis Cup team.

The Miller promoters have capitalized on the macho aspect of drinking with emphasis on group acceptance and congeniality, racial integration, and the heroism and physical skills related to alcoholic intake. Super Bowl spots of 30 seconds alone have cost $185,000.[36] In the "Miller Guide to Intercollegiate Sports", the language of sports reporting is interwoven with ads, which hitch-hike on the simile of news with terms like top draft pick, post game wrap up, relief pitcher, three on two, huddle, fast break and grand slam.

Healthy, energetic joggers in the Miller Sports Bulletin exchange beer preferences thusly: "If we make ten miles, I'll buy you a beer." To which the other replies: "If we make ten miles, I'll buy you a Lowenbrau."[37] Marv Throneberry, ex-baseball player, says "I like to play baseball and I like to drink lite." Football players Dick Butkus

and Bubba Smith share the conclusion that "After a nice civilized game of tennis, there's nothing like a couple of lite beers", and while they were playing, they recall (in newspaper ads) "Lite beer is like a quarterback. We can't wait to knock one down." Pool player Steve Mizerak tells of his beer tastes "when you shoot a lotta pool in bars", and baseballers Boog Powell and Koichi Numazawa of Japan agree that "Two heavy hitters touch bases on bats, balls and beer."[38]

Meanwhile, the federal government has made efforts to ban active athletes from appearing in such ads,[39] although many athletes still do not see a problem with use of alcohol and other drugs by athletes.[40] Beer commercials have been defended by some alcohol commissioners as promoting "responsible drinking", but one coach, Tom Landry of the Dallas Cowboys has refused to allow beer advertisers to sponsor his television show.[41]

The synthesis of beer with sports teams and civic and community identity makes it difficult to separate out cause and effect relationships in the society of alcohol and its media. Teams are named for beer, such as "The Budweiser Bombers", the Women's Flag Football Champions[42] and the Cincinnati Suds, a softball team,[43] and of course, the Milwaukee Brewers, in a city, which according to the ads, "means beer". Hamm's beer has been identified with the North Woods, Olympia beer with the Pacific Northwest, Coors with Colorado and the Rockies, and Lone Star beer as the "national beer of Texas". And in Newburgh, Ind., bar patrons saved enough beer can tabs to make a chain across the Ohio River to Kentucky, and then sold the recycled metal to aid a youth on kidney dialysis.[44]

The ultimate blend of community and the culture of alcohol came

in the 1982 World Series between the Busch beer-owned St. Louis Cardinals and the Milwaukee Brewers. It was termed "The World Beeries" by the St. Louis mayor, as that city's team catcher, Darrell Porter, a rehabilitated alcoholic, was named most valuable National League Pennant player. The Suds and "Six-Pack Series Features Happy Teams" and "Cities of Beer Drink Champagne", proclaimed newspaper headlines.[45] Beer-drinking mobs paraded in Wisconsin, a state where rampant alcoholism affects 1.7 million (a third of its population),[46] and where milk "builds the powerful minds and bodies of our youth" and must vie with promoters of beer which "tempers the emotions of our hard-working-adults."[47] And in St. Louis, winning Cardinal fans and city officials shuddered when opening day of 1983 fell on election day, but the city considered an exception for the stadium as Mayor Vincent Schoemehl said "Baseball without beer ? Unthinkable. "[48]

Beyond the impact of social habits, ads, and entertainment content in media, the educational power of news media might be contemplated, since "Much of the portrayal of an alcoholic life-style is done unwittingly."[49] Television comedies and drama provide models, images and norms often "inimical to an intelligent alcohol policy" and magazines like Playboy and Cosmopolitan seem to see plentiful alcohol as a hedonistic requisite to the "good life".[50]

Newspapers appear to be more responsible and "only infrequently does a story inject a gratuitous reference to drinking",[51] although the news coverage of alcohol has numerous limitations. While editors often sit on committees on drug and alcohol abuse, and have even offered free funerals for those killed while driving and drinking,[52] there seldom is a health or nutrition beat dealing with alcohol. Instead, the issue shows up ex post facto in disaster news (death and accidents), in events

rather than processes and in symptoms rather than causes. Even obits are used mainly to teach reporters style and news values ("How many dead tells the story."), and causes of death emphasize accidents, homicide and disaster rather than disease.[53] Nevertheless, "What the papers fail to do is to show the frequent involvement of alcohol in serious automobile accidents and crimes."[54]

In the coverage of drug issues in general, newspapers reflect ignorance, fear, false perceptions and unreliable information on drug abuse, and narrow perspectives as they rely mostly on sensation and drama and depend too much on police reports and government policy.[55] A consistent editorial policy is often lacking, as tentative, dramatic research reports on alcohol create headlines from "Liquor Can Give a Boost to Health" to "Booze Called Risky Way to Thwart Heart Attacks". Words like "abuse" and "disease" show up in confusing contexts to probably confuse readers.

Further cross purposes in media content include feature stories on "How to Make Wine", "How to Stock a Home Liquor Closet" and "How to Cure a Hangover", and food and holiday content heralding drinks to "health and happiness", especially for New Year's and St. Patrick's Day. The columnists appear entertaining, sophisticated and intimate and "make many references to drinking and drinkers".[56]

The Milwaukee Journal has a beer columnist named Steve Byers. Austin American-Statesman columnist John Kelso has his own "Bar Trail" column (showing his picture on a foaming beer mug), and he writes of it and is popularly known for his consumption of alcohol.[57] Chicago columnist Mike Royko assembled a beer tasting panel, and Bill Helmer of Playboy evaluated beers saying "I've always liked my likker hard and cheap . ."[58]

Other writers and columnists present positive images of alcohol culture: Henry Fairlie of the Washington Post praises "Bar Conversation: It Meanders With Charm All its Own".[59] Drew Jubera of the Dallas Times-Herald laments the decline in downtown hotel bars as "watering holes" and "good places to get blind".[60] Los Angeles Times columnist Jack Smith complains of the decrease in the art of cocktail toasting.[61] Denver Post writer Patrick McGuire discusses at length how beer promoters (Coors) are "psyching out the beer drinker".[62] And Harper Barnes of the St. Louis Post Dispatch (in Busch Beer Country), writes of the competitive Coors "beer mystique" and of his taste tests with the food editor, a free-lance photographer, and a bartender at the local press club tavern.[63]

While columnists like Coleman McCarthy[64] and others like Dr. Joseph Pursch ("Dry Doc") have warned of the dangers of alcohol, other more popular columnists and respectable editorialists may counteract them. When tentative evidence was offered that beer might be better for health than jogging, the Louisville Courier-Journal in Kentucky(a state known for its legendary liquor industry), editorialized: "The physically unfit of the world surely are entitled to drink a toast. And, preferably, not in the light beer but in the good old-fashioned heavy kind."[65]

Columnists and other writers on college newspapers appear to be promoters of alcohol in many instances rather than critics or educators. In this respect, they are similar to ads, which "contribute virtually nothing to the basic purposes of education" and encourage "the temptation to chuck the hard work of study and intellection for the indignity of escape."[66] Once again, media is surrounded by society, as drinking at student beer busts and faculty cocktail parties are a way of life. Colleges now report not only the inability to monitor or control use

of alcohol,[67] but must face beer sponsorship of pep rallies and chug-a-lug parties, and such promotional literature as the "University of Budweiser" Spring Break '83 in which students are urged to "Enroll Now" for "Extension Courses" at Florida beach towns, with beer-sponsored concerts, tee shirts, message centers(to call home), and road routes to drive there. And without drinking ?

It's true that colleges have alcohol hot lines and counseling centers,[68] and pamphlets which "discuss(es) briefly why people drink", and the University of New Hampshire even removed an alumni magazine cover showing a woman graduate opening a champagne bottle to celebrate graduation,[69] but the mood and pressures on drinking in school may be more positive than negative.

For example, in Austin, Texas, known for its alcoholic night life and drinking legislators and students, members of the local school board laughed at and voted down a proposal to ban alcohol ads from broadcast of athletic events. "I'd rather vote against sin," said one member. 'Do we really need to deal with this?", he asked.[70] At the local state university (which has plans to grow wine grapes on its oil and ranch land), the student newspaper guidelines prevent rejection of alcohol ads,[71] and while student editors urge stronger DWI penalties,[72] they oppose raising the drinking age to 21.[73] Editors also criticize sexual stereotypes of females in beer ads,[74] but are not critical of the psysiological dangers of alcohol. One page one story highlighted a fraternity's "Chug 'n' Pedal" contest in which bike riders in 1981 had to do some "Fast Drinkin'" before riding.

The campus alcohol culture is glamorized by student journalists, who boast of being "loyal beer drinkers",[75] who satirically (?) urge drinking over jogging, and suggest beer-stamps and federally subsidized alcohol.[76]

One editor, a law student, urged students "get drunk" to celebrate Texas Independence Day, and was challenged by the Dean of Students, who reminded him that three students had recently died alcohol-related deaths on campus.[77]

Another student writing a feature about a campus beer-tasting party, said "Raucous laughter and drunken singsong can only lead to the mutual scrapping of nuclear stockpiles. Indeed, beer is The Way to world peace."[78] One student columnist boasts that "I cut my teeth on Early Times" and "I learned the pleasure of sippin bourbon whiskey" from "hard-drinking roomies" who taught his the flavor of good liquor that "enables you to contemplate the decline of your GPA or romantic fortunes with easy sanguinity." He boasts in jest (?), "I could be the latest in a long line of Longhorn bourbon enthusiasts, another inheritor of a great southern tradition." Almost aside from writer motive, his language is perhaps significant:[79]

> "Journalistic integrity demands I disclose my real favorite: Jack Daniel's Black Label, Old No. 7. . . .There's nothing like that ineluctable thrill as a sip of Jack Black dances down your throat to whisper a warm and seductive 'hello' to your gut."

A cute "Editor's Note" added said "Godwin thinks he's bad."

Journalists may write satirically of alcohol, but so do scholars whose words also obscure the dangers of the drug and whose sophisticated style discourages debate. For example, when The Silver Bullet: The Martini in American Civilization by Lowell Edmunds, was reviewed in The Social Science Journal in January 1983, a fake U.S. Army M.D.Captain "Benjamin ('Hawkeye') Pierce" "liked the book because it made me thirsty", but he preferred that "his devotion to the martini not be publicized."[80]

In recommending the amusing book, the fictitious reviewer wrote that Edmunds "does a service to mankind" in writing of the martini's

"mystique and its legendary powers for anesthesia and seduction." Among other praises,both he and Edmunds cite the drink as:[81]

> ". . .a harmonious melding of sound and sensation. . . . . commitment. . .emotion. . .art. . .a friend:a comfort for the end of the day; a butress against the onslaught of enemies . . .a healer of wounds inflicted in the daily confrontations with the forces of evil. . .the restorer. . . . the water of life. . .a rock:a light in the midst of darkness; certainty in the midst of ambiguity;solidity in the midst of flux;substance in the midst of nothingness;security in the midst of chaos. . .the fixed point of reality that gives meaning to all other points; . .the axis upon which the world revolves. . . the foundation stone of civilization. . . . ."

This deification of alcohol as a religious and social experience, homorous or not, might be placed alongside the educational efforts regarding the substance in both media and society. Two areas where the news media have facilitated a public debate on alcohol include (1) News about its use, abuse and rejection by "minorities"--not only racial, ethnic and sex groups, but the alcoholic as a new "minority", which dared to "come out of the closet", accept his or her own nature, and ask society to accept that individuality; and (2) News about the violence associated with drinking while driving and resulting injuries and death to children--a long-time held news value.

Alcohol problems are no longer designated to the minority subcultures of the slums of Skid Row or the ghetto.[82] The media focus on the cocktail culture of Hollywood and Washington D.C. and their news-making public figures provides the context for increasing focus on alcohol as a social issue. Those with power to create news have often confessed to excesses in "Drinking too much (which) has always had a bad name--alcoholism."[83] The language of the minority gays has been used by alcoholics to "come out of the closet" and publically join the "alcohol community" in the "sober environment." The secret "sin"is openly admitted as the publics and not the press generate the debate.

Iowa Governor and U.S. Senator Harold Hughes, who quit alcohol in the 1950s, became a spokesman on the prevention, treatment and rehabilitation of alcoholism. Congressman Wilbur Mills of Arkansas, after 38 years in the House of Representatives, and press exposure of his alcolism and friendship with strip teaser Fanne Foxe and the famous Tidal Basin incident, turned to public confession and support. Others on the Washington scene also "came out", including Senator Herman Talmadge of Georgia, Senator Edward Kennedy's wife, and the wife of President Ford. President Carter's brother Billy became the "feature creature" of the press as he was covered from public intoxication to the introduction and failure of "Billy Beer"[84], and his eventual celebrity confession and hospital rehabilitation.[85] The media exploitation of Billy Carter was reflected in its stories:[86]

> "Step right up, everybody! See Billy Carter swig beer in the hotel where matrons of the temperance union are gathered in national convention to discuss the evils of hard drink. Watch the President's wisecracking brother kiss babies and female admirers from 8 to 80. See him--dressed in a white tuxedo and top hat--go up, up and away in a hot-air balloon over Middle America. . . Listen to Billy, a Southern rebel in Abe Lincoln country, needle 'these damn Yankees.' Hear him put down the Internal Revenue Service and put on America. Watch as he grins all the way to the bank . . .Country-town promoters and big-city money men are saying,"We want Billy!' And Billy is available --for a price--to cut ribbons, judge beauty contests, go on talk shows and belly-flop into swimming pools."

The more serious news-making by news-makers using alcohol came from people like Rep. John Jenrette (D-South Carolina), and Michael Myers (D-Pennsylvania), who blamed alcohol for actions related to the FBI investigation of bribery in the Abscam scandal; the role of liquor in the arrest of Rep. Robert Bauman (D-Maryland) regarding sodomy charges; the alcohol-related deaths of movie stars Natalie Wood and William Holden; and the alcohol problems of singers B.J. Thomas and Freddie Fender, and those of Rock star Alice Cooper, and his album "From The

Inside" on his 3-month stay in a hospital for rehabilitation.

Sports stars like Don Newcombe, Brooklyn Dodgers pitching hero, went public with his problem and preventive efforts, and even press figures , whose private drinking, like that of legislators and media sources, had been un-publicized, also have come into the open. Ray Jenkins, editorial page editor of the Alabama Journal in Montgomery wrote publically of why he quit after 25 years of booze in "a business in which drinking is an occupational hazard". He said he learned how in college frats, the state capitol, and as a Nieman Fellow at Harvard where "I drank robustly while partaking of the academic fare."[87] When Rocky Mountain News editor Michael Howard was fired for using drugs, he told his story in the Rocky Mountain Magazine, and the Denver Post and his rehabilitation from use of alcohol and cocaine.[88]

Dependence on alcohol by racial minorities seeking independence in society has been an issue they have raised in the media to which they have gained increased access. Blacks have relied on alcohol since slavery times and have sought escape from the pain of discrimination in drinking.[89] American Indians have been linked inseparably with inability to use alcohol in both stereotype and reality. And "For too long Hispanics have failed to realize the true costs of alcoholism" as their use of it is "compounded by pressures from cultural differences, low economic status, and cultural and communication problems in dealing with existing services and personnel."[90]

Sexual as well as racial minorities have been vulnerable and easy target markets for alcohol because of social isolation and dependence, but alcohol is being added to the agenda of concern by minority movements. Some gays are concerned about restriction to the bar and tavern for an alcohol-related social life. Liberated women are concerned that

their new freedom of choice may be exploited by advertisers of liquor, as women seek a new self-image in a male world with autonomy, sophistication and ability to reject the old double standard.[91]

Liquor ads directed toward women have increased, for example, in Glamour magazine, from three pages in 1970 to 61 in 1974. Sexist ads also appear, as with the Two Fingers tequila, and some women see themselves as unfairly depicted with men drinkers as promiscuous, irresponsible and a bad wife and mother.[92] Efforts to develop a "Nude Beer" showing a naked woman on the label, was seen as obscene by federal authorities,[93] and plans were dropped for a partly-alcoholic soft drink by Anheuser-Busch after it was nicknamed "Baby Beer".[94] Ironically, the concern with sexism appears as strong as that of alcoholism, or even stronger.[95] Racial groups complaining about stereotypes in ads and lack of jobs in the liquor industry have been shown in a more favorable light, or used their boycott power to persuade beer music fests to represent minority culture.[96] Minorities are indeed into a dilemma.

News about deaths from drunk driving is an old story, although "the toll of alcoholism hasn't always been as openly discussed as it is today",[97] despite the fact that drunk drivers "butcher Americans much faster than the Vietnam war did, and cost society $5 billion each year in court time, rehabilitation, lost earnings and other expenses."[98] Drinking and driving are culturally interwoven as "more people drive than vote, and the automobile is a vehicle of self-expression as well as transportation. It is an instrument for risk taking in a society that offers few opportunities for that, now that the frontier is closed . ." (and) most entertainment involves driving to and from places where alcohol is consumed."[99] Having "one for the road" after "happy hour" and being "dead drunk" while driving has been a part of the American

tradition.

Beer is sold in gas stations and at drive-in "beer barns". The practice of driving while drinking has been considered a citizen's right in many states--if not an obligation in the assertion of social mobility and masculinity. Taverns and travel, gas and alcohol, youth and cars are all mixed in the "alcoholic" culture. Tail-gate parties and drinking in convenience store parking lots are social events. Ads for Datsun's Nissan trucks are called a "brawny diesel", "one hunk of a body" and "one hunk of a truck". Ford advertises its "Texas Tough" trucks (often near the liquor ads), while feature stories, for example, have called it "The National Truck of Texas" in an array of journalistic glorification of drinking while driving:[100]

> "True Texans live and drink good-ol'-boy style in trucks. A Texan without a pickup truck is like, well, a sheriff without his posse;a horse without its saddle; a man without a country. . . A pickup is an integral part of any true Texan's life, whether he owns one, rides in one or gets run over by a red-blooded Texas truck on its way to the local beer joint. . . Because that's what pickup drivers drink. Beer. On the way home from work, on the way to buy more beer, on the way to getting a Texas-size buzz on. . . Texans not only drive their pickups as if they were wild stallions, but also they use their trucks to store their shotguns, catch their empty beer cans and turn up country western stations to glass-shattering levels. . . And pickups and beer and drinking just seem to go together. . . .True Texans can't live without their pickups, whether it's hauling livestock, heading for the local bar or just riding around."

The cross-purposes and contradictions built into the blend of ads and television car chases in comedy and dramas of "urban westerns" provide the illusion of freedom on the plains or on mountainsides, without traffic obstacles, while the reality is urban traffic hazards. Current media mania on DWI crusades may be dealing with simplistic, alarmist, ex post facto, perhaps guilty, concern for quick cures, rather than with social causes and psysiological dangers from alcohol.

The flow of journalistic copy includes: publicized names of DWI arrests and license revocations (especially those of public officials, sports heroes, and media figures like Johnny Carson, Robert Goulet and lawyer F. Lee Bailey); drunken pilots and military officers; features on families and individuals destroyed by drunk drivers; editorials for more police to arrest drunks, training to do so, and more jails to hold them; efforts to reduce drinking ages, rules for drinking etiquette, alcohol conferences and classes, more money for rehabilitation, alcohol taxes for curing alcoholics, breath analyzers in bars, "drive-a-drunk-home" campaigns, DWI Month, use of seat belts, and wider streets and straighter curves to give drunk drivers more room to maneuver.

In Texas, for example, where state legislators were taken on a tour of a brewery,[101] and where the state comptroller, a confessed and rehabilitated alcoholic, was arrested for driving 106 miles an hour with empty beer cans in his new car, the state House Speaker backed tougher DWI laws after the press exposed his ties to liquor industry.[102] When NBC made a TV movie on MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Drivers), star Mariette Hartley (whose mother had survived a hit-and-hun accident), blamed an "over-macho legal system" for lax driving laws.[103] That MADD group, which does not oppose drinking, and is directed at government laws and drivers and not against alcohol, was itself organized in a tavern where its founder, Candy Lightner, drank with her friends to ease the pain over her daughter being killed by a hit-and-run drunk driver.[104]

There seem to be numerous ironies in the way in which alcohol becomes news. In Australia, police arrested drivers in a funeral procession, including a priest required to take an alcohol breath test.

The weekly newspaper publisher of the Hanford, California, Lemoore Advance was ordered by a judge to print editorials on the dangers of alcoholism instead of serving a 6-month jail term after conviction for DWI.[105] Hearings before the President's Commission on Drunk Driving "focused on what many people consider the most important weakness in combatting drunk drivers: enforcement of the law and prosecution of violators",[106] but there are signs that the public debate may go further.

Medical groups are asking for laws prohibiting any alcohol in the blood while driving, and are urged to also "broadcast the truth about drinking and flying, drinking and snowmobiling, drinking and drowning, drinking and choking and drinking and burning to death."[107] Alcohol and safety people are saying "No longer can we afford to hold drinking and driving at arms length".[108] The vested interests of insurance companies point to "new approaches"which "are attacking the problem at its source" and urge that "Drinking before driving must become a social stigma, instead of a socially accepted form of homicide."[109] General Moters likewise supports tough laws, but says that "the most effective single thing we could do is to examine our own attitudes about drinking and driving. . . .Drunk driving will only stop when we all decide it isn't socially acceptable."[110] The slow reluctance of society to deal with the values causing people to drink is perhaps indicated by the somewhat incidental and parenthetical mention of root causes after the litany on all the quick-fixes. Only at the end of a long analysis of drunk driving did Time magazine admit that "Finally, (emphasis added) there is a need to change the entrenched social acceptability of the crime."[111] The story appeared under the section on "Law", not "Health".

In evaluating the role of the press in raising the issues of alcohol in society, there are many ironies, which may speak to the many

contradictions and cross-purposes inherent in media and society. They often show the hypocrisy and juxtaposition of media content and the conflicting values in society. A listing of these might be illustrative of mass media, social behavior and the culture of alcohol:

--President Reagan appoints a commission on drunk driving, then drinks publically in a Boston tavern to show his identity with depressed blue collar workers.
--Higher income people tend to drink more, and during the recessions, the poor tend to drink less, George Gallup Jr. reported at dedication of an alcoholism recovery center.
--City planners herald tearing down of Skid Row taverns, replaced by new hotels with fancy bars and costlier drinks.
--Lawyer F. Lee Bailey, who has advertised vodka, was acquitted of DWI, and wrote a book titled How to Protect Yourself Against Cops in California and Other Strange Places.
--College students march on legislatures opposing raising the drinking age led by journalism students, as they clash with MADD groups supporting such laws.
--UCLA establishes the first "chair" for the study of alcoholism and effects of restaurants, cocktail lounges, and supermarkets on neighborhood consumption of alcohol, as answers to such questions "now dance before researchers' eyes like teasing pink elephants".(112) The chair was from an alcoholic businessman who donated the money for research.
--Restricted and fearful airline passengers face pressures to drink in flight; Restricted and fearful and economically-dependent ghetto residents face liquor billboards in their neighborhoods.
--Bartenders serve as folk psychiatrists, while wearing tee-shirts warning of the dangers of alcohol.
--Coors Beer produced bar placards urging drunk drinkers to "Phone Home" and not drive, showing on it E.T., the alien who drank too many Coors in suburbia.
--Miller Beer and KLBJ-FM in Austin, Texas, sponsored a "Run for Your Health" to raise money for hospitals to provide patients with beepers to summon help.
--At Washington D.C.'s"Bullfeathers" bar every Monday night, money from purchase of state-inspired drinks in the "Battle of the States" is donated to D.C.'s Children Hospital.
--Michigan has proposed an increase in liquor taxes to pay for alcoholism, and the Consumer Federation of America urges the liquor industry to give part of its marketing budget to place health warnings on beer, wine and liquor labels, and to mount a multi-media campaign against the dangers of alcohol.(114)
--The Distilled Spirits Foundation has sponsored research on head injuries to drunks in accidents.
--Adjacent headlines:"Houston Brewery to Expand" and Houston "Alcoholism Project Planned"(115)
--World Health Organization warns about global alcoholism, but refuses to ban alcohol at its receptions.(116)
--MADD plans to move national headquarters to Dallas because of its access to transportation. A Dallas firm plans to buy all the Raleigh Hills alcoholism treatment centers for $65 million.

Use of alcohol is so integrated into the body of the individual and that of the society that there is a complex arena of this social problem in which different groups see the problems differently.[117] Also, media techniques have a variety of effects on reducing such destructive behavior,[118] and the very definition of alcoholism is problematic and the concept denotes an all-or-nothing continuum with ambivalent and conflicting notions.[119]

As with the language of the drunks, the new language becomes crucial in defining the social problem. Some insist that drink by the "drunkards" is still a "sin" and a personal and moral responsibility to abstain absolutely. Others argue moderation, free choice and responsible drinking, with emphasis on a social and metabolic technique, and use of the term abuse rather than alcoholism. Others say it is an incurable disease and unchangeable (like race, sex or handicap), and even inherited or genetic in predisposition. Others say such terms absolve and reduce personal responsibility and hand over "cures" to social engineers with even more substances like antabuse, sobering-up drugs, placebos, non-alcoholic chic drinks, alcohol-laced products, and even vaccinations for immunity! Still others approach the problem as one of civil liberties and the right to drive and or drink or to treat one's body without government or social restriction. Research might be directed toward how the new language and values are being shaped by communications and other educational media.

A complex problem still poorly-defined has no simple solution, and the recent DWI cure-all is the most simplistic and appears to be ineffective in the short-term reduction of deaths.[120] Efforts to un-sell alcohol with counter-advertising to de-glamourize it,[121] and the labeling of ingredients,[122] as with cigarettes, have been proposed, along with

suggestions that the liquor manufacturers pay for education and publicity on the results of using alcohol.[123] Social marketing of alcohol would remind consumers of the social costs of its consumption, whereas mere treatment centers afterwards promise simplistic, expensive solutions to alcoholism.[124]

Reactions to alcohol and solutions to its use are varied, and other countries see media as a crucial factor. In Russia, where the average drinker consumes more alcohol than any place in the world, the state-controlled press has urged against drinking.[125] In Spain, where drinking is a serious problem rooted in the culture, and is equated with elegance, machismo and sophistication, it is widely agreed that"a prime cause is runaway liquor advertising".[126] In Sweden, no brash liquor advertising is tolerated, and publicity with sports associations is used to show the dangers of hard liquor.[127]

In Great Britain, cheaper liquor ads have brought more alcoholism.[128] However, on TV, executives have agreed to ban heavy drinking from programs unless it is necessary to the theme or plot.[129] In Scotland, drinking is a serious problem, partly because of the machismo image of the "boys in the bar".[130] In Ireland, the government has banned the advertising of beer, wines and other spirits from state-run radio and television, costing the network nearly $2 million a year in lost advertising revenue.[131] In England, the Independent Broadcasting Authority made brewers unhappy with a new set of rules on TV ads, which must not suggest drinks being bought in rounds, or that refusal of a drink is a sign of weakness, or that drinking means masculinity, or that alcohol has therapeutic value or enhances sexual or social performance. Ads must also avoid wild party scenes, not involve famous personalities, and must avoid the suggestion of drinking alone.[132]

Hope in the mass media to deal with problems of alcohol might be tempered with knowledge of other institutions in society, and the limited power of the media, dependent on ads for liquor, cars and related "social anesthetics", to which the media themselves have been related. Also, many dead-end efforts in research and education and contradictions cited herein need to be ironed out or clarified. The need for social responsibility by the media has been seriously examined,[133] but dramatic DWI campaigns and public confessions by even ex-moon-walkers like Buzz Aldrin, are not likely to change social values. Nor will the singular impact of stories about alcoholism among nuns,[134] or special Alcoholism magazines or special U.S. Postage Stamps on the problem, nor will religious conversion of alcoholics bring social salvation.

Similarly, publishers' programs for alcoholic employees,[135] and the TV networks' efforts to tackle alcoholism among actors,[136] deal admirably with the problems, but often after they have started. Media seminars on reporting alcohol-related stories and TV portrayals of drinking[137] may be a start if news values, perception and selection are integrated with a special concern with health in a preventive and therapeutic specialty. Such newsroom re-organization,[138] with less reliance on education about alcohol through pathology and autopsy in news as a crisis, might help to re-direct research and media policy so as to reduce the counter-productive effects of contradictions and cross-purposes in society and in media.

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